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General Meade Post No. 39



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**DEPARTMENT OF VIRGINIA
AND NORTH CAROLINA**

RALEIGH, N. C.

**COMMANDER
C. H. BEINE**



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Hiram L. Grant

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MEMORIAL ADDRESS

Delivered May 30, 1908, at the Federal Cemetery, under the auspices of the Grand Army of the Republic, by HIRAM L. GRANT, Clerk United States Courts, and late Major of the Sixth Regiment, Connecticut Volunteer Infantry

Comrades, Confederate Veterans, Ladies and Gentlemen:

From the earliest days of the civilized races, they have paid tribute of affection, admiration and sometimes worship, to the last resting places of their dead.

If a founder of a kingdom or father and leader of a people, or the lowly grave of the humble, claiming no tribute but tears, there has been a universal and patriotic centering about the resting-place of the departed.

Perhaps it is because in many cases those who have passed on have no memorial, save the simple head-stone which marks the lowly mound beneath which they rest, and so the memories and affections of those they love center there, and there they bring their tokens of remembrance.

A memorial day which does not rest on a basis of religious reverence is a mere matter of empty sentiment. A holiday it may be of idle gathering and worldly frivolities, instead of a holy day, when, with reverent hands, we place wreaths of flowers upon these spots that hold beloved dust. We thank God and delight to recall whatsoever things were true, and

honest and just, and pure and lovely, and of good report, in the lives and characters of those whose memory we justly honor.

I yield to no one in my admiration and gratitude to God, for the precious legacy of glorious memories that these heroic souls have left us and our children for generations yet unborn. They are not likely to be forgotten. They are becoming more and more a matter of public record, to be known and read of all men, and their influence as an inspiration to worthy lives and noble deeds, will be felt for long years to come.

To-day we strew flowers on the graves of soldiers of the great Civil war, those who perished that the republic might live.

They who fail to honor the services, sacrifices, and the memory of those who died to achieve this great result, evidence a weakness, which, thank God, is not inherent in our nature, and can never develop as a characteristic of our brave and loyal people.

I should be insensible to feeling if I did not realize the great honor conferred upon me by the surviving veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic, in selecting me to speak for them and their organization on this occasion, and in the presence of the few who are patiently awaiting the last roll-call. I regret that the task had not fallen upon one more worthy and competent.

The conception of this organization originated with Doctor Stephenson, at Springfield, Ill., who was a surgeon in the army and who, in 1866, organized the veterans in that city, for the purpose of annually meeting for social companionship. It spread throughout the State and like organizations were formed, but assumed only a local character. The following year other States followed the example of Illinois, and soon

a National Organization was formed, but did not seem to prosper until years after, when General Logan, who had been elected Commander-in-Chief, issued the following letter: "If other eyes grow dull, and other hands grow slack, and other hearts are cold in keeping the solemn trust, ours shall keep it well as long as the light and warmth of life remain to us."

Let us, then, at the time appointed, gather around their sacred remains, and garland the passionless mounds above them with the choicest flowers of springtime. Let us raise above them the dear old flag they saved from dishonor; let us in the solemn presence renew our pledges to aid and assist those they have left among us, a sacred charge upon a nation's gratitude, the soldier's and sailor's widow and orphan.

Spending millions of money in charity, inculcating patriotism into the hearts of the youth of the land, the Grand Army of the Republic has done a noble work. Too soon will come the last bugle call and the sounding taps. The ending of the mighty organization will create a deep loss to the land in which we live, and, in the words of President McKinley, that ending is not far distant, for even now, "the Grand Army of the Republic is marching into the shadows."

After this order the organization assumed a new life, and the interest among the veterans increased from that day and there has been no abatement to the present time.

The Grand Army of the Republic, under whose auspices we meet to-day, is a unique organization, unlike any other in existence. In the words of a post commander-in-chief, "No child can be born into it, no proclamation of President, edict of king or czar can command admission, no university or institution of learning can issue a diploma authorizing its holder to enter, no Act of Congress or of Parliament secures recognition. The wealth of Rockefeller can not purchase the posi-

tion. Its doors swing open only upon the presentation of a bit of paper, torn, worn, begrimed, it may be, which certifies to an honorable discharge from the army or the navy of the nation during the war against the Union, and, unlike any other association, no new blood can come in. There are no growing ranks from which recruits can be drawn into the Grand Army of the Republic. With the consummation of peace through victory its rolls were closed forever. Its lines are steadily and swiftly growing thinner, and the ceaseless tramp of its columns is everlasting tread. The gap in the picket line grows wider, day by day details are made from the reserve, summoned into the shadowy regions to return to touch elbows no more, until by and by only a solitary sentinel shall stand guard, awaiting the bugle call from beyond, that will muster out the last comrade of the Grand Army of the Republic."

These lines which I have quoted are so beautifully expressed, giving us the origin and purpose of this national organization.

COMRADES.

"It seems but yesterday, though forty years have sped,
Since all the boys in blue came back, by Grant the hero led,
With waving flags and happy tears, and loud and joyful shouts,
With warm embrace and friendly grasp, we hailed them mustered out.

And what a change those forty years of peaceful life has made,
But yesterday beneath the trees our grand old Chief was laid.
He left his sword, with honor crowned, upon life's last redoubt,
And sleeps to-day in silent camp, by glory mustered out.

And where are they who led the blue, amid the flames of war,
And brought our beautiful banner home, without a missing star?
Unbroken are their dreams to-day by a battle's martial shout,
And Hooker, Burnside, Thomas, Meade, are heroes mustered out.

No more along Potomac streams are pitched the tents of Lee,
No longer Sherman's legions march in triumph to the sea;
The Wilderness, where thousands fought, to-night is dark and still,
And the tasseled corn is waving on the slopes of Malvern Hill.

The silky grass is long and green upon the ramparts old,
The farmer turns the rusted shell up from the dewy mould,
And war no longer shakes the skies that smile above the South,
The robin woos his sweetheart in the cannon's brazen mouth.

The trumpet's piercing blast is still, the shackled slave is free,
The Mississippi proudly rolls unguarded to the sea.
The snowy wings of peace are spread where stood the embattled line,
The tall Palmetto of the South leans to the Northern Pine.

The tattered sabre breathes of times when fields were won and lost,
The empty sleeve in silence tells how much the victory cost.
Behold the heroes mustered out—they sleep in glade and glen,
On mountain tops, by river sides, four hundred thousand men.

Beneath the flag our fathers made, they fought for me and you,
And crimsoned with their precious blood their honored coats of blue.
Upon a hundred battle-fields, in victory and in rout,
And in the prison's horrid pen, the brave were mustered out.

The ranks grow thinner day by day, we hear the funeral chant
As the gallant bluecoats, one by one, follow their leader, Grant.
The battle drums are muffled now, upon the last redoubt,
And where the bugle notes are still, the boys lie mustered out.

Methinks I see the last camp fire blaze up against the sky,
While the angels add the last brave name to the deathless roll on high.
They are gone, but still in vision fair I see the ranks of blue
That march in glorious column in Jehovah's grand review."

There was a moral question and a legal one—one slavery,
the other secession—one appealing to conscience, the other to
the Constitution. Both demanded settlement, but we strove
to confine the war to the settlement of only one. Even our

President, Abraham Lincoln, said he would save the Union with slavery if he could, without slavery if he must.

The significance of Memorial Day increases with each passing year, for the reason that each year brings to us with greater force the obligations which we owe to these on whose graves we strew flowers to-day. The human race will probably never again witness a war of such extent, when nearly five millions of free and enlightened American citizens engaged in deadly strife, covering a period of four years, entailing a loss of six hundred thousand men, and resulting in such widespread destruction and suffering, besides the expenditure of millions in treasure.

On this occasion, so sacred to us, I refuse to consider the cost of the war on any financial line. The real cost of the war, which ought to rise in the thought and to the lips of patriotic men when they speak of what the war cost, should be computed in relation to the splendid manhood of the nation, South and North, which went to premature graves in that mighty conflict. No life is so obscure, its light so dim, but that its going out will leave a shadow on some other life.

If it had not been for that war, and its awful holocaust, there would have been at least three-quarters of a million more homes in this country than exist to-day. It seems but yesterday that they were a part of that living, breathing, moving, restless energy we call human life. To-day they are deaf to the applause of friends, the taunts of foes, the sweet voice of love and heedless of their fair renown and insensible to glory. Over these graves will grow the flowers that never fade and the ceaseless music of these pines will fitly emblem the love we bear them.

In meed of praise let there be a generous share for those who at home so loyally held up our hands in every possible

way, and of that praise, give far the larger amount to the women of our time. Mortal lips were never able, and never will be able, to do them justice.

Classic history furnished no grander instances of heroic womanhood, than those so common in these Northern homes as to excite no comment, but their part was no less than that of their men who went to the front.

One instance is of a young lady who was engaged to be married to one who became a general officer, who had left his office at the very beginning of his professional career, and left the young woman to whom he was pledged to bear his part in the defense of the Union. His name was General Bartlett. In one action he lost an arm, and in another a leg, and thus crippled, as he lay¹ in the hospital, he thought it only right that he should release the young woman from the engagement to a man so hopelessly maimed and broken, and so he wrote her. What was her reply, sent back as quick as word could go? "So long as God spares enough of your body to hold your soul I stand to my engagement."

Can history ever surpass this example of loyalty and heroic devotion? And that was the spirit of the American woman in that conflict, whether it was North or South.

That war put an everlasting quietus on those triple relics of destruction—Slavery, States' rights and Secession. But the right settlement of slavery and States' rights were but incidents of the war, whose real object and supreme result was to preserve the Union of States, to make the nation one and indivisible, now and forever.

General Alexander, in a speech at Nashville, Tenn., at the reunion of Confederate Veterans said: "Whose vision is now so dull that he does not recognize the blessing it is to himself, and his children, to live in an undivided country, who would

to-day relegate his own State to the position it would hold in the world were it declared a sovereign?

“To ask these questions is to answer them and the answer is, the acknowledgement that it was best for the South that the cause was lost. The right to secede, the stake for which we fought so desperately, were it now offered us as a gift, we would reject as we would a proposition of suicide.”

General Frazier also said at the same meeting: “When the grand and noble Christian, General Robert E. Lee, surrendered at Appomattox, he spoke with a heart too full for deceit, in that no Southern mother swore her son to bitterness. She swore him to love and honor. All accepted the inevitable finality. When you saw furled for the last time the Stars and Bars you had followed for four years, when you had made your last final march back to your homes, had a final farewell to your comrades, and found perhaps the sainted mother sleeping in the family cemetery, when you pressed upon your wife’s lips a loving kiss, you sealed a solemn pledge that from that day on you would know but one country and one flag.”

It was settled that American heroism and valor were the same, no matter under which flag displayed, for neither side could justly charge the other with any lack of these high qualities of vigorous manhood, and in this fact, that cost us so much at that time, was another blessing; for since then there has been profound mutual respect, where before there was so much lack of it as to make impossible any true feeling of real friendship.

“Bitter and bloody were the days of woe,
That filled the land with agony and tears,
And hid the sun throughout those deathful years;
Eyes wont to smile burned with a sullen glow,
And brothers met as foeman meets a foe.

At last the end; and as the black sky clears
Rift after rift, till all the blue appears,
 The clouds of hate, their thunders muttering low,
Rolled slowly back; the storm of war was past.
And now one country lives in every breast,
With one allegiance through the land confessed.
 We could not see, until the strife was done,
That though we fought each other to the last,
 The cause of both in very truth was one.
We know it now: the victory jointly wrought
 Through awful carnage by that mighty host,
 All may as one great army proudly boast.
No honest effort ever comes to naught;
All deeds for conscience are with honor fraught."

Patriots, animated by the same faith, actuated by the same love of country, beset by the same trials and dangers, endowed with the same fortitude, and who fought as heroically to maintain self-government as did the Colonial fathers to attain the same, with them are immortalized in the same halo of glory.

While we honor and revere the memory of those who defended the flag, we should not forget the loyalty and heart-burning for four long years in the homes out of which they came.

There was anxiety and continued agony beyond what we in the field knew. We knew the worst when night fell. Besides that, we had much of pleasantry of camp and march, and the fierce, all-engrossing excitement of the battle-field. Our loved ones at home, if they learned that we had been safe on a certain date, knew not what might have occurred since, so the heart agony continued from day to day for weeks and months.

Forty-three years have passed since the hostile bugle sang truce, and Lee yielded his army and his sword to Grant at Appomattox. Since the great armies of the Civil war were mustered out no foe on American soil has fired on the flag.

The birds in the Southern forests have sung their songs and been undisturbed by missile of war. The palmetto and magnolia of the Carolinas, the holly of the James, and the long mosses of the Florida forest, once scraped by shot and shell of contending armies, have since been stirred only by the gentle breeze of peace.

The generation which participated in that great struggle is rapidly passing away. The Grand Army of the Republic in the year 1900 had nearly four hundred thousand members, in 1906 about two hundred thousand, the loss by death in 1907 almost thirty thousand.

“Yes, the shores of life are shifting
Every year,
And we are seaward drifting,
Every year.
Old places, changing, fret us,
The living more forget us,
There are fewer to regret us,
Every year.

“But truer life draws nigher,
Every year,
And its morning star climbs higher,
Every year.
Earth's hold on us grows slighter,
And the heavy burden lighter,
And the dawn immortal brighter,
Every year.”

Every recurring Memorial Day makes more perceptible the rapid thinning of their gallant ranks, but every recurring year engraves more deeply on the nation's heart the record of their deeds. The survivors, many with the infirmities of age, felt that the day with all its observances was, above all, their day. Their hearts grew young again and beat faster as they lived again in memory their struggles.

The spirit of this day is not that of festivity and mirth, nor does the word "decoration" express it. We are here for memorial purposes, to recall the deeds of the heroes of the nation, of those whose names are written upon the history of our land. We honor ourselves by paying tribute to their valor.

They have stamped their immortal deeds upon the scroll of ages, and though they have passed away they are not dead, for the spirit which animated them shall never die.

Yes, this is a funeral day, if you will, a day on which we have assembled to thank the God of battles and of peace that these dead have neither lived nor died in vain, to pay a meed of respect to memory of these and in order that our children may from these graves draw inspiration, that will make them worthy successors and more patriotic Americans.

Love of country that forgets even the lowliest of its National defenders is a spurious brand.

Differences of party, creed and sect are to-day forgotten, while north, south, east and west, all over our broad land, with reverent hearts, circle the sacred mounds where sleep our country's dead.

You will find honored veterans in this cemetery, humble graves with only a small stone inscribed "unknown," but more glorious in our eyes and in yours than sculptured marble and granite shaft is the little flag that waves peacefully over each mound, and tells more eloquently than anything else could who and what they are who sleep underneath. Young men, thoughtless though they be, will be impressed by the meaning of this ceremony and their minds will grasp its noble significance. They will mark these mounds on the tablet of their memory.

To-day are gathered thousands and thousands in National cemeteries to honor those who sacrificed their lives, while

many others are buried in trenches and on battlefields, others lie alone in some hidden and quiet nook of the forest where they fell. Though we can not reach every one, not one is forgotten, and we bend over them all in reverent memory, and in grateful appreciation of all that their death meant, and ever will mean to the country and to posterity.

In this beautiful Southland, where these heroes sleep, the spring flowers have already begun to bud and blossom, fit emblems of the immortality of the soul, and as we bow to-day in reverence, love and devotion over these many graves, may we not ask all to forget the strife and estrangement of the past, and mourn with us for the untimely closing of so many lives, lives adorned with noble effort in the past and so full of promise for the coming years, years that will never come.

It was a great and noble cause for which they died, and we best honor them and their memories by passing on, unsullied, the heritage they preserved for us.

Cicero, in his oration against Mark Antony, referred to an ancient Greek sentiment that, "all memory of civil strife should be buried in oblivion." We may forget the strife, and still, year by year, as new life and beauty spring from the mouldering dust of those who fell, we do well to decorate their graves, to tell our children of their deeds of valor.

As the years have passed, a robe of charity and peace, broad and beautiful as the green mounds under which the fallen heroes of both sides sleep, has been spread over the whole land and those who fought each other now stand side by side.

The lessons of the past have not been lost nor forgotten, and should the time ever come when millions of men should be needed for the defense of the flag, they will come from the North and the South of this united country.

The Spanish-American war was attended with many good results, but one of the best was the impetus it gave to the restoration of cordial relations, and the spirit of union and Americanism throughout the country. It gave the young men of the South an opportunity to put on the blue and show their loyalty and devotion to the flag, and to win, as they did, a heroic share of the glory and greatness that was added to the republic, while their representatives in public life distinguished themselves by the conspicuous and patriotic character of their utterances and services. What has followed is but the natural result, and every survivor of the Union army should be profoundly thankful that his life has been spared to see such a complete vindication of all that for which he contended.

Corporal Tanner, in an address at Arlington, said: "And we can easily imagine that the Southern boy thought even more deeply, as he gazed upon the Confederate button in the lapel of his father's coat, and thought of the faded old uniform of gray, but he said, 'Father, it has been your flag since Appomattox, and it has been my flag all my life, and I must go.' And the old man of the gray nodded his head and ruminated on the whirl of events which had caused him to send his boy out in defense of the flag he had striven for four years to tear down. So it was that son of Yank and son of Johnnie stood side by side in the conflict, supporting, defending each other, though their fathers had sought each others' lives."

COMRADES.

"Yes, the ranks are growing thinner with the coming of each May,
And the beard and locks once raven are now mingled thick with gray;
Soon the hands that strew the flowers will be folded, still and cold,
And our story of devotion will have been forever told.

Years and years have passed by, comrades, though it seems but
yesterday
Since our blue-garbed Northern legions marched to meet the Southern
Gray.
But a day since Massachusetts bade her soldier boys good-bye,
But a day since Carolina heard her brave sours' farewell cry.

Those were days we all remember, in our hearts we hold them yet,
And the kiss we got at parting, who can ever that forget?
For it might have been from father, from fond mother or of wife,
Or from maid whose love was dearer to the soldier far than life.

Through the lonely midnight marches and the fierce-fought battle's
roar,
Or the sailor's lonely watches, gone (please God) forevermore.
Though these may not be forgotten 'till the dew our graves shall wet,
Yet the color of our jackets, can each loyal heart forget?

For the ranks are growing thinner, and though clad in blue or gray,
Soon both armies will be sleeping in their shelter tents of clay.
And the loud reverberation, over all the land shall be,
Sounding grandly through the ages as the tocsin of the free.

For we both but did our duty in the great Jehovah's plan,
And the world has learned a lesson, that each one may read who can;
And when gathered for the Muster, on that last Eventful Day,
May the God extend His blessing sweet alike to Blue and Gray."

Let passion be hushed, for the grave is silent.

Let flowers only spring from the mold, as the emblem of
that purer and better nature which alone will live in our
memories.

Let the sound of those they wrought for
And the feet of those they fought for,
Echo around their graves forevermore.



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